United Nations A/C.1/54/PV.27

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-fourthsession

First Committee

27th Meeting

Tuesday, 9 November 1999, 3 p.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Gonzalez ..... (Chile)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 64, 65 and 67 to 85 (*continued*)

Action on all draft resolutions submitted under all items

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): At this morning's meeting I informed representatives that the Committee would proceed this afternoon to take a decision on the remaining draft resolution appearing in Secretariat Informal Paper No. 8 in cluster 1, in other words, draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.30.

I call on the representative of Canada.

Mr. Westdal (Canada): I wish to advise that further to a meeting we have just held of all the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.30, on the fissile material cut-off treaty, and with their entire agreement, I wish to withdraw this draft resolution from consideration.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): We have therefore concluded the draft resolutions.

Do any other delegations wish to speak? It appears not. We have thus concluded the work entrusted to the Committee.

Conclusion of the third stage of the Committee's work

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): An announcement is needed with regard to the draft resolution on the question of Antarctica, but I would prefer the Secretariat to do that, so I call now on the Secretary of the Committee.

Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung (Secretary of the Committee): The meeting to discuss the question of Antarctica was scheduled for tomorrow, Wednesday. However, a request has been received that the meeting be held on Thursday morning instead.

Mr. Reimaa (Finland): It is my understanding that we are approaching the end of the session, but before closing, let me take this opportunity to say a few words of thanks on behalf of the European Union, the Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated countries Cyprus and Malta and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries members of the European Economic Area (EEA).

We would like to extend to you, Sir, our sincere congratulations on the successful conclusion of the Committee's work. We would like to thank you for the efficient way you have conducted the work of the Committee, enabling us to conclude it in an organized way and on time. With your constantly good spirits and sense of humour, Mr. Chairman, it has been a real pleasure to work with you.

We wish also to thank the other members of the Bureau and all the staff of the Secretariat who have supported them in their responsibilities. We would also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary of the First Committee, Mr. Lin, who with his long experience has been a valuable help to all of us.

Our sincere thanks go also to the excellent interpreters, translators and conference officers who have made the smooth conduct of business possible.

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Finally, we would like to say how much we have appreciated the good and constructive cooperation with all our colleagues and delegations during the First Committee's session this year and certainly we are looking forward to continuing that fruitful cooperation next year.

Mr. Soufan (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): On this same occasion allow me, on behalf of the Arab Group, which Lebanon has the honour to chair this month, to express to you, Sir, our deep thanks for and appreciation of the efforts you have made in order to bring the work of the Committee to a final successful conclusion. Your conciliatory efforts won consensus for many draft resolutions. We hope that approach will be solidified in the future in order to promote the concept of consensus, remove the threat to humanity of the armaments race and achieve greater stability and security for the international community. We are confident that your spirit of cooperation and dialogue will be helpful in achieving our goals. You provided equal and fair opportunities for all delegations to express their views.

I should like to pay tribute to members of the Bureau and express appreciation to the Secretariat staff, interpreters, translators and conference officers, who worked together to ensure the success of the Committee in completing its work.

Mr. du Preez (South Africa): On behalf of the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement, and on behalf of other countries associated with the Movement, I wish to extend our appreciation to you, Sir, and to other members of the Bureau, as well as to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, to the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, and the Secretary of the First Committee for the way in which they have led our work.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretariat staff, the interpreters and translators and other United Nations staff members who have been essential to our work.

Finally, I should like to thank colleagues for the cooperation that we as a delegation have received from many in this room, and we look forward to working with them when the Committee meets again.

Mr. Pokaz (Croatia): On behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, which my Permanent Representative, Ambassador Ivan Šimonović, currently chairs, I wish to express to you, Sir, our sincere congratulations and gratitude for the able way in which you have guided the deliberations of the First Committee to a successful and timely conclusion. Your abundant diplomatic experience was essential to the success of this exercise.

In the same way we also want to thank the other members of the Bureau and all the staff of the Secretariat who supported them so effectively as they carried out their heavy responsibilities. A special word of gratitude goes to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, who has been with us throughout the session. Our deep appreciation goes also to the excellent interpreters, translators, conference officers and other United Nations staff members who have been so essential to our work. Without their effective support we would not have been able to complete our session. I thank them all very much.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): My delegation was going to speak on behalf of the Group of African States once you, Sir, had made your concluding statement on the work of the Committee. I also want to say that my delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The African Group would like to express its satisfaction at the way in which you, Sir, have directed the work of the Committee. In spite of some rather sensitive matters on the agenda, your experience, your human and professional qualities and your determination to ensure that the rules of procedure were abided by right from the beginning of the work, without any bias in any way, have been greatly appreciated by the African States.

We would like to thank all the other members of the Bureau and all delegations for their cooperation. On behalf of the African Group I would also like to say how much we have appreciated the regular presence of and the interest shown in our work by Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and Vladimir Petrovsky and Abdelkader Bensmail also, whose counsel and advice greatly contributed to the happy conclusion of our work. We would also like to salute the remarkable amount of work carried out by all those who have supported the work of the delegations. I pay tribute to the Secretariat, including Mr. Lin and his team, and the members of Conference Services — the interpreters and the translator — and all those behind the scenes who have contributed to the success of our work.

Before concluding I should like to thank you, Sir, yet again and hope that you have a good trip home. On behalf of the African Group may I say that we wish everyone in the room the best for the new millennium, a new millennium that we hope will be full of peace and prosperity for all peoples and all nations.

Mr. Hoang Chi Trung (Viet Nam): It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Asian Group. First, I wish to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation for the efficient and admirable way in which you, Sir, have guided the First Committee to a very successful conclusion. We are particularly impressed with the high standards and disciplines you have applied to the work of the Committee this year.

Our sincere thanks also go to the other members of the Bureau, particularly the Secretary and other staff members of the Secretariat whose help has facilitated our work to a great extent. The delegations of the Asian Group are also very thankful for the spirit of cooperation they have enjoyed from the delegations of other Groups. Finally, may I wish you, Sir, and other members of the Bureau all the best.

Mrs. Fritsche (Liechtenstein): I have the honour to congratulate you, Sir, and to thank you on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States for presiding over the work of the Committee in a most efficient and effective way. Due to your able leadership we were in a position to deal expeditiously with the issues before us and to conclude our work as scheduled. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau and to the Secretary of the Committee, Mr. Lin, as well as to his colleagues in the Secretariat.

I furthermore wish to express my appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, as well as to Mr. Petrovsky and to Mr. Bensmail, Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, for facilitating our work.

It was not always easy to guide our work, Mr. Chairman, but you have done an outstanding job in managing an orderly consideration of and action on all draft resolutions. We gladly submitted to the discipline that you imposed on the Committee, including the use — or non-use — of cellular phones.

Last but not least, let me express a word of special appreciation for the excellent work done by the interpreters, translators, sound engineers, conference officers and Secretariat staff in charge of producing and distributing documents. Without their valuable contribution we could not have achieved the same result.

Mr. Aamiry (Jordan): I seek your assistance, Sir. My delegation has been extremely busy of late, which meant I was absent from the room when the vote was taken on quite a number of draft resolutions. Is there a way that I could provide the Bureau with our voting on that list of draft resolutions in a timely way so that it will appear in the reports of the First Committee to the General Assembly? I ask this from the floor for the benefit of other delegations that might — only might — be in the same position as our delegation.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I would suggest that once we have concluded all the formalities and congratulations and when the meeting has concluded, you could express the concerns you have about the draft resolutions in which you did not have the opportunity to participate.

Ms. Martinic (Argentina) (*spoke in [Spanish]*): It has been a privilege and reason for pride for the Argentine delegation to work under your chairmanship, Sir. As we said when we started our work, you represent Chile, a country friendly to Argentina. Therefore, I should like to thank you most warmly on behalf of the delegation of Argentina for the way in which you have conducted our work. It has not been an easy session for the First Committee. However, your diplomatic skills and personal talent, together with your fine sense of humour, have made it possible to conclude our work in a satisfactory fashion both in time and in content.

Through you, Sir, I wish to address our thanks to Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala, to the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, to Mr. Lin, the Secretary of the Committee, and to the staff of the Secretariat, including the interpreters.

On behalf of our delegation, I wish to thank you, Sir, once more, and very warmly, for the way in which you have conducted our work.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Argentina, and through her I wish to thank her husband, who replaced her occasionally in the work of the Committee — but only very occasionally. I think we would prefer to have had her here all the time.

Mr. Fruchtbaum (Solomon Islands): I just want to say to you, Sir, that I will be happy to greet and speak to you in any diplomats' bar, saloon or restaurant in any part of the world.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much. I was rather concerned because I had not yet received that invitation from you and I was rather worried about it.

Mr. Miranda (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I do not wish to take up time as I know that you, Sir, wish to make a concluding statement, but our delegation could not fail to congratulate you on the magnificent way in which you have conducted the debates of the Committee, and through you, your country, of which you are a worthy representative both personally and professionally. Our delegation wishes to highlight the progress that has been made in the Committee's development, which would not have been adequately carried out had you not been presiding over our debates.

Briefly through you, Sir, I also wish to thank Ambassador Dhanapala. By his support and presence here he has given us encouragement to continue with our debates and with the meetings. Furthermore, I should like to thank the entire Secretariat for its very useful support and cooperation throughout the long weeks we have spent together.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): Before dealing with the substantive aspects I want to emphasize in a very special way that a promise has been kept. When we began the meetings of this session everybody promised, without even knowing me, that they would cooperate with me, and that is really a risk. Not only did delegations keep that promise, but even more than I expected. I am extremely grateful. I feel very stimulated and I should like to go on for another two weeks — well, no; I do not really think so. But had it not been for your cooperation we would not have been able to conclude the work in time or in substance. I shall talk about the substance later.

At the same time the cooperation of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, represented by the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Dhanapala, was crucial for me. Had it not been for his opportune and constant presence here we could not even have voted on the draft resolutions. He was really very useful to us, and we have had a very fruitful dialogue. I am surrounded by people who have helped me.

As well as the magnificent interpretation — which is almost an issue of pride, but the interpretation is always very good here — I also wish to thank the conference officers. It is almost part of the inventory of the United Nations to have excellent conference officers. The two excellent ladies who helped us were really perfect. It is amazing that all these details finally allowed us to ensure a conclusion to the work of the Committee. However substantive that work, it cannot be concluded if these details do not exist. I wish to express my thanks with regard to this point.

I should like to thank all members for their cooperation and for the way in which they have understood my rather different style of conducting the debate. It was a bit too slow for some and too quick for others.

According to the timetable, we have concluded the last stage of the Committee's work with action on all draft resolutions and decisions on disarmament and international security as scheduled. I should like to seize the opportunity to exercise the privilege and duty of the Chairman to make a few concluding remarks on the work of the Committee at this last session of the twentieth century. It is a privilege because of the unique position that the Chairman plays in the Committee. He has a captive audience, ready to hear his overview. It is a duty because the Chairman must speak, to the extent possible, in the name of all participants and thus must maintain a balanced and impartial position. To this I committed myself with great emphasis.

The United Nations has always stood for dialogue among nations, and the First Committee has again taken the pulse of the world in the field of international security and disarmament. Issues of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons continued to receive a large share of attention from Member States, and rightly so. Of 52 draft resolutions and decisions, 17 dealing with nuclear weapons and related issues were acted upon. The debate and the negotiations and the action taken this year have strongly reflected the international community's deep concern at the impasse, bilaterally and multilaterally, on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We must consider that the situation is static at best but is perhaps worsening.

It is important to bear in mind that the United States of America and the Russian Federation continue to reduce their nuclear stockpiles to levels agreed upon under the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms — START I — and that both countries are maintaining cooperative risk-reduction activities. That

situation is greatly welcomed, as are recent reports that the two States are exchanging nuclear scientists at command and control centres to reduce the possibilities of misinterpretation of missile launch signals at the end of the year during the Y2K transition. I believe that the general consensus in the Committee would urge further dialogue between the two States.

Multilaterally, we are working under increasingly frustrating conditions. The need to consolidate the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime was underscored. The Committee has underlined the significance of the April-May 2000 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. However, the Conference faces a severe test of the will of the States parties to advance the full implementation of the decisions and resolutions adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.

Concerns were also expressed at the continuing impasse in the work of the Conference on Disarmament, and appeals that it fully play its role as the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament were widespread. The Conference on Disarmament faces a crucial year to advance the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agenda by beginning substantive work on priority items as soon as possible.

The First Committee had an unprecedented debate on the issue of missile proliferation and missile defence. As we all know, this issue has been attracting growing international concern because of recent events, especially because of its impact on strategic stability, nuclear doctrines, the further reduction and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and possible repercussions on disarmament- and security-related treaties and other legal instruments. In my opinion the two draft resolutions presented this year make clear that further constructive study and intergovernmental discussion on the issue are indispensable.

Even while the First Committee was meeting, the first State to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, in 1996, rejected ratification of that Treaty. I am heartened that the unilateral moratoriums of the five permanent members of the Security Council on nuclear explosive testing are being maintained, as are the those of the two States that tested nuclear devices last year. The Committee added its voice by endorsing, in October, the Final Declaration of the Vienna Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, thus sustaining the process for achieving the entry into force of that Treaty. It is a matter for regret that efforts to add a new impetus to the stalled process of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, such as the new elements in the resolution on a new agenda, have not yet come to fruition.

On a positive note, the Committee welcomed the principles and guidelines on nuclear-weapon-free zones adopted by the Disarmament Commission this year. The Committee also reaffirmed its support for existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and encouraged the establishment of further zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. The Committee has reasserted the importance of the two existing conventions on chemical and biological weapons by adopting respective draft resolutions on them without a vote. It is encouraging to note that work will continue in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, with the support of the international community, to strengthen the implementation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Committee has also urged parties to the Biological Weapons Convention to conclude their negotiations on a verification protocol for that instrument by the time of the fifth review conference of States parties.

The First Committee has once again reaffirmed its interest in pursuing an international dialogue on the subject of the prevention of an arms race in outer space. It is now in the hands of the Conference on Disarmament to pursue the request of the Committee to begin that dialogue. It is highly encouraging that the international consensus on the need to tackle the illicit trade in small arms is growing. In fact, with respect to the United Nations, it took a step forward this fall when four draft resolutions dealt with this item. A true dialogue was held and further understanding was reached on the convening of a United Nations conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects in June/July 2001. The preparatory process will begin in February 2000. In the face of the enormity of the damage wrought by the problem of illicit small arms proliferation and hence its connection to complex civil strife and drug trafficking, the task ahead is challenging.

There is under way at the United Nations a quiet revolution uniting willing and able countries that are peaceful and financially secure with countries in post-conflict situations, helping the latter to re-establish their security and economic and social progress. The First Committee welcomed the activities of the group of States

interested in peace-building through practical disarmament measures.

In the quest to rid the world of the scourge of anti-personnel landmines, the Committee has lent majority support to efforts along two tracks. It has welcomed the convening in December this year of the First Annual Conference of the States Parties to Amended Protocol II, on prohibitions or restrictions on the use of mines, booby traps and other devices. It also stressed the importance of the effective implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — the Ottawa Convention — which successfully held its First Meeting of the States Parties this year and will hold its Second Meeting in September 2000.

The Committee also gave its support once again to disarmament efforts at the regional level by welcoming the revitalization of the United Nations Regional Centres in Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean, and by commending the continuing operation of the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. It is regrettable to note that the draft resolution adopted on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament was simply a procedural one, keeping the item "alive" rather than being substantive. The convening of this fourth special session is very important in the field of disarmament, particularly in view of the current international environment and also the dynamics of international events. That cannot be disregarded.

The next session of the First Committee will take place during the Millennium Assembly in the year 2000. There will be much reflection between now and then about the significance of the end of the century and the arrival of the millennium for disarmament and international security. It is hard to avoid the feeling that history is being made and that trends are being set. As members know, there will be a preparatory process for the Millennium Assembly. I believe it is incumbent upon us in the First Committee to make sure that the contributions that disarmament can make to international peace and security are recognized and highlighted in the preparatory process and the Millennium Assembly itself.

I believe that the activities of the First Committee this year have contributed to advancing the general cause of disarmament and international security, with the problems and defects we have mentioned. That assertion must be put into perspective. We have checked the barometer of international relations in this respect. That is a mere statement. The torch of responsibility to continue efforts at dialogue and to encourage negotiations, especially on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, will now pass to other international forums. May their work bear positive results one day.

On a personal note, as Chairman of the Committee I should like to thank all the members of the Committee most sincerely, in particular the members of the Bureau who cooperated with me so effectively, for the cooperation they have extended to me during the session. It was indeed a singular honour and privilege for me to work with people so distinguished and knowledgeable in the field of disarmament. I wish to thank you all sincerely for all your efforts.

I also wish to express and reiterate my deepest thanks and gratitude to the Vice-Chairmen of the Committee, Mr. Günther Seibert of Germany, Mr. Kestutis Sadauskas of Lithuania and Mr. Tarig Ali Bakhit of Sudan and the Rapporteur, Mr. Carlos Sorreta of the Philippines. I am deeply grateful for the assistance, camaraderie, advice and *mise en garde*. Thank you.

Finally, let me on behalf of the Committee thank again Mr. Jin Yongjian, Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services; Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs; Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament; and Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung, Secretary of the Committee, and all his collaborators in the Secretariat. My special thanks to all the young people — which makes me rather nostalgic — who are sitting behind me and are very acrobatic. I wish to thank them for the good work they have done to facilitate the work of the Committee.

Finally, and no less importantly, I wish to reiterate my special thanks to our interpreters, translators, verbatim reporters, press officers, conference officers and documents officers who have been patient with us, and the sound engineers and all others who work behind the scenes to bring the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion.

The final thing I have to say is that in accordance with the programme of work and the timetable of the Committee, on Thursday there will be a general debate on draft resolutions with regard to agenda item 66, the question of Antarctica. I also wish to remind delegations that tomorrow, Wednesday, 9 November, is the deadline

for the list of speakers in the general debate and submission of draft resolutions with regard to that topic.

The next meeting will be on Thursday at 10 a.m. here in this room.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.